



# Ten Assessment Tips

## Assessing is Challenging

*These tips are designed to offer you strategies to foster student learning, prevent academic integrity policy violations, and help with your marking. If you want more information about assessment, make an appointment with a CELT coordinator.*

### Exam Tips:

1. Whenever possible, don't reuse exams. Even better—create the kinds of exams that allow you to give students exam questions in advance, or create exams that are open book.
2. Break final exams into sections, and hand out only one section at a time. When a student is finished one section, then they may opt to have a break before starting on the next section.
3. When possible and practical, ask for your final exams to be scheduled in your regular classroom, as this may help with student recall.

### Marking and Feedback Tips:

4. When you can, use rubrics. They can take time to create, but a well-crafted rubric will save you grading time and offer greater consistency. In order to make the most of your rubric, consider doing these things:
  - Hand your rubric out with your assignment and go over it with students. A rubric should provide criteria, but not answers. An answer key is a different kind of tool.
  - If possible and appropriate, ask for student input into your rubric. This ensures students understand assignment criteria and fosters student investment in their own learning.
  - Provide sample assignments and ask students to evaluate each with the rubric to ensure they understand it.
  - Ask students to self-assess with the rubric and submit it with their assignment.
5. Remember that marking time should align with the goals of the assignment—meaning that if 10% of the assignment's grade is allocated for grammar and punctuation, then 10% should also reflect the percentage of your marking time allocated towards those elements.
6. Feedback and evaluation are not the same thing. Feedback is designed to help students improve, while evaluation informs students about their performance. Not every assignment or exam requires both.
7. To help students improve, encourage them to use the feedback you offer by requiring them to do something with it (and offer marks, if possible), such as one of the following:
  - Ask students to write a short note outlining their three main takeaways from your feedback.
  - Ask students to identify how they will use the feedback moving forward.
  - Ask students to identify how and where they applied the feedback in a subsequent assignment.

### Assignment Tips:

8. Whenever possible, give students options for assignment topics (but not so many options that students are overwhelmed!) or format (paper, presentation, video, etc.). Can students work to strengths to demonstrate achievement of the course's learning outcomes? Can they have some autonomy?
9. Whenever possible, avoid reusing assignments. The more often you use the same assignment, the more likely it is that someone will have access to a previous student's work.
10. Avoid composing assignments that are on topics so common that answers or essays can be downloaded from the internet.

### General Assessment Resources:

- Ambrose, S.A., Bridges, M.W., DiPietro, M., Lovett, M.C., & Norman, M.K. (2010). *How learning works: Seven research-based principles for smart teaching*. Jossey-Bass.
- American Association for Higher Learning. (n.d.) Nine principles of good practice for assessing student learning. Retrieved from [http://www.assessment.uconn.edu/docs/resources/AAHE Principles of Good Practice.pdf](http://www.assessment.uconn.edu/docs/resources/AAHE_Principles_of_Good_Practice.pdf)
- Angelo, T.A., & Cross, P.K. (1993). *Classroom assessment techniques: A handbook for college teachers*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. Jossey-Bass.
- Bean, J.C. (2011). *Engaging ideas*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Jossey-Bass.
- Boud, D., & Falchikov, N., eds. (2007). *Rethinking assessment in higher education: Learning for the longer term*. Routledge.
- Brissenden, G., & Slater, T. (n.d.). Assessment primer: Field-tested learning assessment guide. Retrieved from <http://www.wcer.wisc.edu/archive/cl1/flag/start/primerfull.htm>
- Corrigan, P. (2013). The writing process. *The Teaching Professor*, 27(2), 4.
- Jacobs, L. C. (n.d.) How to write better tests: A handbook for improving test construction skills. IUB Evaluation Services. Retrieved from [http://www.indiana.edu/~best/write\\_better\\_tests.shtml](http://www.indiana.edu/~best/write_better_tests.shtml)
- Lang, J. M. (2013). *Cheating lessons: Learning from academic dishonesty*. Harvard UP.
- McAlpine, L. (2004). Designing learning as well as teaching. *Active Learning in Higher Education*, 5(2), 119-134.
- Walvoord, B. E., & Anderson, V. J. (2010). *Effective grading: A tool for learning and assessment*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Jossey-Bass.
- Weimer, M. (2012). Should you be using rubrics? <http://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/teaching-and-learning/should-you-be-using-rubrics/>
- Weimer, M. and Walvoord, B. (2013). *Grading strategies for the college classroom*. Magna.
- Whetten, D. A. (2007). Principles of effective course design: What I wish I had known about learning-centered teaching 30 years ago. *Journal of Management Education* 31(3), 339–357.
- Wiggins, G. (September 2012). Seven keys to effective feedback. *Feedback for Learning*, 70 (1), 10 – 16.  
<http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/sept12/vol70/num01/Seven-Keys-to-Effective-Feedback.aspx>

### Rubric Resources:

- Association for the Assessment of Learning in Higher Education sample rubric site:  
<http://course1.winona.edu/shatfield/air/rubrics.htm>
- Authentic assessment toolbox (includes rubrics): <http://jonathan.mueller.faculty.noctrl.edu/toolbox> - a tutorial for learning about authentic assessment; has a link to rubrics which explains the required components of rubrics, their rationale, analytic vs. holistic rubrics, and instructions for writing rubrics. This web site is an award-winning MERLOT learning object. (author: Jonathan Mueller)
- Critical thinking rubrics: <http://wsuctproject.cltl.wsu.edu/ctr.htm> - an example of descriptions of levels of performance for seven elements of critical thinking (from Washington State University)
- Explanation of rubrics with examples: <http://www.tltgroup.org/resources/flashlight/rubrics.htm> - what rubrics are, the importance of communicating rubrics to students, and some examples (from the TLT Group)
- Grading rubrics: <http://faculty.css.edu/dswenson/web/Gradingrubrics/gradingrubrics.htm> - examples of rubrics used for assessing team presentations, case presentations, training presentations, handbook evaluation, team member evaluation, class discussion evaluation, conceptual models, and ethics audit (from D. Swenson, College of St. Scholastica)
- Handout with tips for designing a rubric: <http://www.uoguelph.ca/tss/id/ta/tapdfs/Designing%20a%20Rubric.pdf>
- Reddy, Y. M., & Andrade, H. (2010). A review of rubric use in higher education. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 35 (4), 435-448.
- Rubrics articles on the Faculty Focus website: <http://www.facultyfocus.com/search-results/?q=rubrics>
- Rubrics list on University of Scranton Kania School of Management Assessment Council site:  
<http://academic.scranton.edu/department/assessment/ksom/> - to assess article reviews, business strategy analysis, case analysis, critical thinking, decision-making, ethical considerations, global perspectives, leadership, oral communication, team cooperation, and writing.
- Rubistar free tool to create rubrics: <http://rubistar.4teachers.org/index.php> - a way to choose descriptions of performance levels useful to assess oral projects, multimedia, math, research and writing, products, reading, art, work skills, science, or music.
- Stevens, D. and Levi, A. (2005). *Introduction to Rubrics*. Stylus Publishing.
- Wolf, K. & Stevens, E. (2007). The role of rubrics in advancing and assessing student learning. *The Journal of Effective Teaching*, 7(1): 3-14.